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REBUILDING THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COURSE IN ENGLISH

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THE REBUILDING of the elementary school course of study in English in the light of new educational principles requires significant changes in content and outcomes. The revised English course of study abandons as subject matter grammatical rules, picture study, and memorizing of poetry, and claims in its stead a rich social content based on life situations. The new outcomes should be of such a nature that they will function in the life situations of the individual. This discussion pertains to the content and outcomes of the course of study in language.

In the past, the fundamental difficulty with the language course of study was that it did not offer content which was significant to the child. It did not afford opportunity for satisfying the needs which the individual child experienced. It did not provide adequately for answering questions which his experiences had raised in his mind; for solving problems which he had encountered in his actual life; for gratifying the particular hunger or yearning he had felt. With a content so external and artificial to the child's personal experiences, problems, and longings, it was not possible to challenge the best spoken and written language expression.

The old course attempted to make pupils amateur literary producers or grammarians rather than to equip them with effective language with which to meet adequately the simple needs of everyday living. This frantic effort to put emphasis on the form rather than the content resulted in stunting the child's growth in expression. How much better to rely on the positive treatment which strengthens the language power through conscious practice in speaking and writing, in meeting a need, than to depend upon rules and drills for language growth. The drill activity disassociated from a need does not conform with the psychological principles involved in the learning process.

The elementary language course should endeavor to make educational aims function and make ideals operative in the practices of the school room. It should plan a system of training that will touch every phase of the child's life, his manners, morals, experiences, aspirations, and all that makes for social efficiency and personal worth. The language period is peculiarly adapted to attain these ends. Through the intercommunication of the group, the social atmosphere can be created. A spirit of earnest effort, a

genuine interest and sympathetic appreciation can be characteristic of this group.

If the free spontaneous expression found in the out-of-school speech is preserved in the school, the course must concern itself with the experiences and needs that are as real as those which children meet in play, social, and business experiences outside of school. At home and in play, the child asks for things he really wants. He explains how or why something was made. He states the reasons for his opinions and tries to convince others. He exchanges notes or letters with his friends or writes to a business firm ordering something that he needs. In all of these actual situations, his speaking and writing are merely a means of getting what he wants. The language course should provide for continued practice in speaking and writing under similar conditions that meet the child's needs and satisfy his desires.

Growth and mastery of language can be accomplished only through content which provides for vigorous aggressive self-activities. All subjects of the curriculum provide activities which may be used in arousing the child to communicate his ideas and emotions clearly and effectively. For example, building huts, weaving blankets, tanning leather, grinding corn are activities which the social studies and practical arts provide. Language inspired through such activities makes possible vital expression and prevents artificial reciting of mere words. If language is a natural outgrowth of vital activities it will cease to be monotonous, perfunctory, and formal. Since the various school subjects and outside activities provide the child with something to say, the attention of the language period can be directed to training him how to say it clearly and forcefully.

A language course built on such a plan must be flexible. It can demand nothing specific except the outcomes. The children and teacher must be free to choose the specific language activity, which will be determined by the interests and needs of the particular class. The function of the teacher is to guide the interests of the class and to help select

from among the numerous interests, those which are best suited to bring about the desired language outcomes.

Under perfectly natural conditions there are in every school many real needs for speaking and writing. In addition to those provided by all school subjects, there are occasions such as the following which are constantly arising and may be utilized: a child introduces his mother; he introduces a speaker; he tells an anecdote or story during the social period; he goes on many errands; he serves on a committee and brings back reports to the class; he acts as a member of a traffic squad; he writes a social letter to his ill friend and a business letter to some firm for a catalogue. The ordinary affairs of the everyday life of the school offer many opportunities for the writing of informal notes. Parents appreciate the friendly letters sent to the child who is ill, or the weekly letter from the child telling of his school life and progress. The business letters to departments of the government, stores, and factories bring courteous satisfying responses which testify to the desire of the public to co-operate with the schools in the education of children. Situations of this type make possible purposeful and effective language work.

SUCH IS the plan of the Denver Elementary Language Course of Study, the content of which is based on the following life situations:

I. *Life situations in which spoken language is used*¹

A. Conversations

At the table, at social gatherings, in discussion groups, at public gatherings, in public places, during introductions, during calls, at interviews, at greetings and partings, in asking directions, in telephoning

B. Practical discussions

1. Speeches of felicitation, dedication, presentation of gifts, acceptance of gifts, introduction of speakers, inauguration speeches,

¹ Adapted from an outline by Dr. Ernest Horn, University of Iowa

speeches upon retiring from service, substitute or impromptu speeches

2. Reports of meetings, conferences, visits, illustrated lectures, demonstration talks
3. Persuasive talks as in membership drives, political campaigns, school campaigns for thrift, health, cleanliness; as in applying for the position of office boy or paper carrier; as in selling tickets to school entertainments
4. Messages and announcements of games, lectures, exhibits, entertainments, meetings
5. Explanations and directions as to how to make a radio, a cake, or a flower box; how to go to City Park or Union Station; how to iron a dress or care for children

C. Anecdotes and stories

1. Telling anecdotes and stories to children in the home, school, or social group
2. Telling anecdotes and stories to adults at social functions, on the train, at the dinner table, at informal gatherings of friends, to people who are sick or in trouble, at public meetings

D. Meetings

1. Formal proceedings of organizations, clubs, committees, assemblies, classes
2. Informal proceedings

II. *Life situations in which written language is used*

A. Letters

1. Business letters to firms for information, for supplies
2. Social letters to sick school friends, to parents, to children in other communities
3. Notes: formal, informal

B. Notices of games, lectures, exhibits, entertainments, meetings

C. Reports

Of committee, to school or class; of

delegate, to class or school council; official, president of school council; financial, money saved by class each week; minutes of council or club; reviews, books, articles, speeches, plays; of observations or experiments

D. Note taking

For preparation of papers, speeches, and discussions

E. Filling out forms

Mail order blanks, applications for money orders, checks, deposit slips, test forms, telegrams or cablegrams, information blanks or questionnaires, budgets

F. Making a bibliography

G. Creative writing

For papers, clubs, class, newspaper or magazine articles in school or local paper, diaries, imaginative writing, such as stories, poems, plays

EDUCATORS interested in making and using the new courses of study in elementary language recognize the value of defining outcomes in terms of practical life needs. Guided by modern educational thought the ultimate outcomes of language study include the information and knowledge, habits and skills, attitudes and appreciations belonging to the various life situations in which people use language. The problem of determining what the desirable outcomes of language should include, in the light of present-day educational principles, challenges serious attention.

Extensive research is needed, first to decide what outcomes are desirable and second, to discover, on the basis of immediate needs, which outcomes belong to the elementary school, to the junior and senior high schools, and to the colleges and universities and further to make a grade by grade scale of accomplishment if the facts disclosed by the investigations indicate the advisability of such a procedure.

In order to be most useful the new courses of study should contain outcomes stated in detail and in language such that the child as well as the teacher knows what the desired

outcome is. They should provide for growth in abilities from grade to grade and should indicate those which, because of general use and importance, are of the greatest value in the life of the individual.

Outcomes should be stated in detail. The individual when confronted with the need to tell a short story knows that the desirable outcome is to tell the story in such a manner that the response of the audience will be what he anticipates, and therefore gratifying to him. He knows that his bit of humor has carried over if there is a mirthful response from the audience. However, the story-teller has recognized the need of many specific abilities in reaching his ultimate goal, the telling of the story effectively. In planning and preparing the story these abilities are included: the selection of an appropriate story, a beginning that arouses interest, clear-cut pertinent sentences, and an effective closing sentence. There is another group of abilities concerned with presenting the story effectively to the audience: the musical quality of the voice, clear enunciation, distinct pronunciation the adjustment of the voice to the size of the room, the mood of the audience, and the dramatic demands of the situation. Each of these abilities is an immediate end at different stages in the preparation and presentation of the story. The new courses of study need to define outcomes in such detail that the teacher and pupil will be guided to consider the many specific details which are involved in securing the more general outcomes.

Outcomes should be stated in language that the pupil as well as the teacher can understand. Each child should know what he is expected to accomplish in the daily lesson and during the semester and should be held responsible for these definite achievements. Such a device as an achievement chart will aid the pupil to check his progress in acquiring desirable habits and skills.

Outcomes should provide for growth in abilities from grade to grade rather than for complete mastery in any one grade. The first story a child tells may perhaps not be satisfying but on subsequent occasions he will

make conscious effort to improve his technique. Therefore in stating the outcomes grade by grade provision should be made for acquiring information about a given ability, for organizing this information into knowledge, and for conscious practice to develop habits which in turn must have sufficient attention from the pupil and teacher to attain skill. Along with this training must come the attitudes and appreciations which are associated with each particular ability. Consideration for the feelings of others engaged in a conversation is as important a part of language training as using correct verb forms.

One hesitates to set up outcomes which at the present time it is impossible to measure. To test accomplishment in terms of knowledge is comparatively simple; one either knows or he does not know, he can either decline the pronoun "I" or he cannot. It is much more difficult to say at what point knowledge manifests itself in altered conduct. The knowledge that "we were" is correct may or may not alter the conduct of the individual. But an even greater difficulty presents itself when it becomes necessary to settle the number of repetitions needed to form a habit or the amount of ease in execution necessary before a habit may be said to pass into a skill. Even more perplexing is it to determine the attitude of an individual toward, let us say, a pleasing quality of voice or his appreciation of an agreeable tone in both his own and others use of the voice. Nevertheless the new course of study must make definite provision for developing habits and skills, and attaining attitudes and appreciations since these are as necessary in living a complete, useful life as are information and knowledge.

THE TREND in the new courses of study is to stress the outcomes which belong to both spoken and written language, namely; choice of words, correct usage, and organization of ideas in clear-cut sentences and paragraphs. Since we speak more than we write, more time should be spent in acquiring desirable outcomes in spoken than in written language. The training of the voice to be an effective medium of oral expression is the most

desirable outcome to be striven for in spoken language. All the schools in the entire nation should make the improvement of voice a major outcome and find effective means of improving the voices of both teachers and pupils and, if possible, the entire community. Since the most frequent use of written language is letter writing, schools should provide much opportunity for acquiring the abilities necessary to write letters effectively. Spontaneity and disposition to write should not be overlooked as primary considerations in developing letter writing ability. This means that at first these values should not be smothered out by an immediate demand for perfect form in letter writing. Children should be encouraged to write letters in forms of expression natural to children if they are to grow in practice. Very little is accomplished by holding back a child's impulse to communicate through writing until he can produce a perfect letter. On the other hand

good form in letter writing should not be overlooked as an ultimate objective. The point here is that there should be growth in matters of correct form as well as in ability to express his ideas spontaneously.

The course of study must contain many concrete illustrations of how the content subjects and the social life of the child may be used as a means to securing desirable outcomes in the study of language. It should also contain the ultimate outcomes of language instruction in order that the teachers may have a view of the language field as a whole. The outcomes for each grade, expressed in language which the child as well as the teacher can understand and in such detail that the immediate as well as the ultimate ends are clearly defined should also be included. The grade by grade outcomes should give emphasis to those abilities which are of most worth because of their frequent use or importance in life.

THE FAIRY QUEEN*

From Percy's "Reliques"

COME FOLLOW, follow me,
You fairy elves that be:
Which circle on the green
Come follow Mab your queen.
Hand in hand let's dance around,
For this place is fairy ground.

When mortals are at rest,
And snoring in their nest
Unheard and unespied,
Through keyholes we do glide;
Over tables, stools and shelves,
We trip it with our fairy elves.

* From *The Treasure Book of Children's Verse*. Doran.

SEA FEVER*

JOHN MASEFIELD

I MUST GO down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a gray mist on the sea's face, and a gray dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the seagulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gipsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a
whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

* Courtesy of the Macmillan Co.



OBJECTIVES IN ENGLISH

As set up in the Baltimore Course of Study for Primary Grades and Kindergarten

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EARLY IN 1924 the public schools of the city of Baltimore issued, among other courses of study, one in English for its kindergarten and primary grades.

This course, leaving details of method to be handled in a later supplement, aims first to find the real place and spirit which language has in the daily life of children, and then to include the range of material and the suggestions on language expression necessarily found in primary courses of study on this subject. Through its recapitulation of a common doctrine, however, there runs a strong conviction that the heart of speech lies not in the suitability of the subject and not in the correctness of the language forms in which the subject is clothed. These may both be above reproach, but that vital spark, which makes the difference between a formal exercise and a human experience, be entirely wanting.

Primary schools have long been under a plague of "language lessons." Our children, in their normal lives at home and on the street, are living vital experiences into which language of a direct, discriminating, picturesque kind weaves itself almost unconsciously. When these same children come into the traditional class room their speech immediately grows meager, stilted, self-conscious. "Out of the fullness of the heart" in real life "the mouth speaketh." Too often the traditional school has no store of genuine experiences from which the hearts of the children may be filled. Furthermore when fullness of heart begins to empty itself, the process is not always of the precise and orderly kind. Its earnestness and honesty may pass unappreciated by the teacher because of her super-sensitiveness to language error and her fear of childish eagerness. The lives of too many of the younger children in American schools are still being passed in a school room atmos-

phere of stupid silence and inactivity broken only by doing what one is told and saying what one is expected to say.

It was in the belief that the daily use of English and improvement in English in school should open to the younger children a more abundant life that teachers and supervisors in primary and kindergarten classes helped in the formulation of Baltimore's recent course of study. Nor did they imagine that spiritual objectives could be reached by a disregard of technical standards. The balance sought between these two desiderata is shown in the excerpts from the Baltimore course in English which follow.

COMPOSITION

POINT OF VIEW

THE PRINCIPLE which is fundamental in language teaching is that language is a means, not an end. It springs from natural life situations and is normally employed to modify those situations or to set up different ones. It is a bridge from reality to reality. This is true in children's lives as in the lives of adults.

In the everyday use of language the vital thing is its adequacy to the experience in hand. Formal correctness is desirable but, as a matter of fact, the great bulk of the world's work is conducted through a language interchange which is far from being grammatically correct. The teaching of the schools will be unable, through generations to come, to change this condition. More serious than the grammatical incorrectness of speech is its paucity, its irrelevancy, its insincerity, its detachment from experience, its feebleness in the face of a real objective to be reached. Intelligent effort to raise the standards of pupils in these matters should be balanced by the teacher against effort already being put forth to substitute correct for incorrect forms

of speech. Anything less tends to deaden children against stimulation to untrammelled thinking and vigorous, effective, unselfconscious speech.

Our business as teachers must be to enrich experience in the lives of our pupils, to provide for the cordial sharing of that experience through language interchange and to allow the interchange to lead into fresh experience. These experiences are, of course, found in the fields of children's work and play, in their citizenship activities and in their reliving of the subject matter of history, geography, literature, etc. They come out naturally in periods other than that of language lesson. But they must be actively accepted by the teacher as more fundamental to the children than are the formalities of the language which expresses them. This means that the experience must be used not merely as a peg hastily driven by the teacher or lesson and as hastily used to hang a language formula upon. Experience is the vital thing; language is to be used to make it more vital through its sharing, and to carry the sharers on to the door of new experience. What is demanded of language in the process is not only correctness, but movement, fitness, the accomplishment of real ends.

ATTAINMENTS IN ORAL ENGLISH

IMPLIED IN QUESTION FORM

Kindergarten

Do my pupils show a disposition to select their most interesting experiences for sharing through conversation with their classmates?

Do they ask questions about things they do not understand and make original comment on the day's happenings with a reasonable freedom?

Do they speak naturally and with courtesy to the group?

Do they answer questions verbally?

Have they a steadily increasing vocabulary?

First Grade, B and A

Continue emphasis on Kindergarten attainments. Add:

Are my pupils intelligent and responsive listeners?

Are they developing the sentence sense?

Is there a decrease in the number of common class errors?

Do they modulate their voices to suit the size of the group?

Have my children poise of body?

Second Grade, B and A

Continue emphasis on Kindergarten and First Grade attainments.

Have my pupils increased freedom and fluency in talking?

Are they developing the ability to talk in an orderly manner, keeping to the point?

Has the feeling for the sentence as a language unit been deepened?

Are they able to judge their own work by the class standards?

Are they careful of their pronunciation of final syllables, final consonants, etc., without allowing these points to take their attention from matters of meaning?

Third Grade, B and A

Continue emphasis on attainments for Kindergarten, First and Second Grade.

Have my pupils grown in the power to organize their thoughts?

Are they better able to stick to the point?

Has there been an improvement in their choice of vocabulary and a reasonable increase in its extent?

Are my pupils talking in sentences?

Have they improved in their beginning and closing sentences?

Is the decrease in common speech errors apparent in all class work?

ATTAINMENTS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH

IMPLIED IN TEACHER'S QUESTION

First Grade

Are my pupils able to write their names with proper capitalization?

Can they copy correctly a simple, motivated sentence from the blackboard when occasion arises? ("Come to our party." "Be my valentine.")

Have they evident pleasure in their work in this new field?

Second Grade

Can my pupils copy correctly a few simple related sentences such as may be developed in the oral-language period?

Are they able to write one or more simple original sentences, under the teacher's supervision, when needed for a booklet, valentine, birthday-card, etc.?

Do they actively enjoy the work?

Third Grade

Are my pupils able to write independently a few simple related sentences?

Do they show through their written work that they have the sentence sense?

Do they show an increasing automatic control of punctuation, capitalization and indentation?

Do they find sufficient satisfaction in the work to attract them to it?

BRINGING THINGS TOGETHER

ETHEL I. SALISBURY

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THERE ARE two ways of working. One is to analyze, to differentiate into groups, to separate, to divide, to take apart and examine, to dissect, to split, to classify, to catalogue, to do anything to set off the different parts of a thing over against each other, to pigeon hole, to inventory, to put, to arrange. This way of working is invaluable to keep an orderly pantry, to run a storeroom, to take care of the mechanical features of administering a school, to preserve physical order. It is a working method which has to do with things, not humans.

The other way of working is to keep together parts that should be related, to connect, to join, to harmonize, to unite, to integrate, to synthesize. It is a way of working with humans, with growth—therefore with instruction.

Aristotle was the great classifier and his example has done a deal of damage because his followers have frequently applied this business of analysis to the wrong material—their friends, instruction, feelings, emotions, humans.

What the classifiers have done to instruction! Constantly those in charge of courses of study receive time allotment questionnaires, asking how many minutes we spell, how many we write, etc. To classify the day into seconds, minutes and hours was all very good, but to pigeon hole instruction, a vital, living, growing thing into sections comprised of minutes is to separate thoughts, feelings, purposes that should have continuity, unity, sustained attention. No good teacher ever conformed to a time allotment. Why do college professors perpetuate it? It is a bit of machinery to separate, split, divide the very things we wish to keep together. If we can not be rid of all of it because of limited laboratories, we can dispense with some of it which is useless. Which brings us to the question of

subjects, the results of the work of classifiers, cataloguers.

They have vivisected a living, vital, throbbing beautiful English and the parts have become dead—*spelling, writing, composition*—each separate, lifeless, unused. We poke them up and turn them over with a little drill and contemplate them sadly—they are so dead—and we keep each in his cell—the dimensions vary—ten, fifteen possibly twenty minutes.

What shackles the classifiers have put on us! I observe a little child who is the victim of this senseless division of subjects. He talks and writes about a cat—not his own cat, because a classifier split child interests into “subject matter and method” and after the division of the two the child and his own cat didn’t get together again in the classroom, but cats in general—cats—just cats. I do not need to tell you the process but as a result of it he yields up his prosaic tale—he is also getting to be a classifier.

“There are very many cats. Some cats are black.”

Very good—capitals correct, periods in. Very commendable—but the composition is as dead as the cats, and the teacher was the proof-reader who put in most of the periods. She does not have time to breathe life into either the cats or the composition because she must turn swiftly to the Standardized Spelling list—a very good list be it said—and teach the spelling of “buy,” “did” and “over.” Say them, write them, sound them, toss them up in the air and shift gears for writing. Heads up, feet flat. We are going to write but we are not going to write anything—a paradox, which registers in stolid little faces. Capital U—ready, “A hill, a rill, a hill, a rill, a hill, a rill, etc., etc., etc.,—separated, disassociated, functionless, the results of classification.

I observe another classroom. A little girl

has a new kitty. What it does mean to have a new kitty!—wonderful experience! She wants to talk about it—to tell how soft and cunning it is. Others have kittens too and each wants you to see just how his kitten looks and each will try to help you see it—some on the board. One little girl writes—you help her to spell the words she needs and show her how to make the hard letters—: “My little kitten is as dark as a cloud in summer when it rains.”

She knows that you can see her kitten better because she wrote it. And she writes it to take home to Mother, and in doing this she writes “dark” several times ‘to get it nice.’ And she learns to write and to spell it and it is entirely possible for her to do it with her head up and feet flat. She has something to say—and what child does not!—and says it naturally, happily, carefully. Every day she has something to say if permitted to say it. She will cover the standard list—we will risk a checking.

Is there an explanation to low spelling scores in the fact that children are trying to learn to spell words for which there are no vital associations in their minds? Can we do away with stated, separate periods for these subjects, treating them as a composite in real expression? Nor does this mean elimination of drill, or of checking results. But the drill will be on the use of the tool that is needed. The child is writing a letter on Friday. Why race through the letter to make room for a period in which he drills on the word “Thursday” for a some time use! Can we not keep together rather than separate the elements that compose the art of English expression. To bracket them under the term Language Arts and keep their identity in a time allotment on a program is to retain classification, separation, old machinery, futile instruction. Spelling and writing are not arts. They are the materials, the ingredients to be used in the art of expression. To practice on them endlessly apart from their use is like beating eggs and consigning them to the garbage can before beginning the real business of making a cake.

Have I said to eliminate the teaching or supervision of writing or spelling? No! I have said, “Teach the child to say something that has vitality, meaning within him before he expresses it in the best way possible for him as to form and correctness.” If he does this daily he cannot but gather the bricks and the mortar with which to build. But he can spend a lifetime making bricks and mortar and never build. We need more teaching and supervision of spelling and writing but not as isolated aspects.

I recall a principal’s account of an incident in his school. The writing teacher or supervisor had been in the building but a few moments when he rushed into the office much agitated. Something serious had happened. He tried to explain, but was inarticulate. Finally he controlled his emotion. In his absence the second grade children had learned to write because they had needed to.

The classifiers—and no mean group they are—have made three subjects out of the study of peoples. Obviously to understand a people one must know much about them—assemble, bring together a community of facts and notions about them and feeling for them. What has influenced them—climate, setting, migrations, heritage, literature, art, achievements, problems and responsibilities. But the classifiers have given us Geography, History, Civics with all the attending paraphernalia of time allotments, outlines and texts to keep them separate and ineffective.

In many a course of study one finds the history of a certain people in one grade, the geography of the same people in another and our duties toward them in still another. Because good instruction depends upon bringing together, harmonizing, uniting, teachers have sought to remedy the artificial conditions by teaching a lot of illuminating history with their geography and a deal of illuminating geography with their history and much of civics with both, so that in reality we might have had three rich courses if time had not been so divided as to be a handicap for all. Correlation was resorted to for relief. It is like glue. It will hold two things together

but you cannot mend anything with it that has a circulatory system.

Now this tendency to analyze, to dissect, to divide into its component parts has influenced the form of courses of study over the country. We set up objectives carefully defined and rather inclusive and suggested the activities that would pull these together, unite and integrate them in the learning process of the child. The experienced teacher—or the natural teacher—looks them over and selects the activities for her children which will unite the greatest number of these. When the activities are culminated she checks up to see how many of the objectives have been realized and in the light of this checking new activities are entered into. But the teacher who is not so strong in seeing relationships, bringing things together, is handicapped. When she contemplates the objectives she has the sensation of one on roller skates for the first time. The feet of the latter involuntarily start in opposite directions. The thoughts of the teacher seem to be dissipated by the classification and subclassification into subjects and objectives.

The parts of an automobile are important. We want to know we have them all handy and in orderly fashion. But that which makes

those parts useful, meaningful to people over the world is the proper assembling of them into a Ford or a Rolls Royce. The course of study furnishes the parts but it does not assemble them. This is left largely to the teacher. It is as though we had in alphabetical order all the words of the Gettysburg address. It took a Lincoln to assemble them, to bring them together for a specific occasion to carry a specific message.

In a sense each teacher has to assemble the objectives in activities which are appropriate and possible for her children. But the *course of study* can help teachers in this step of assembling and relating the objectives in typical activities by going a step farther. This it must ultimately do.

No one will deny the service of science, classification, of standardization, but they seem constantly erecting fences, barriers, to art, and teaching above being a science is an art.

It is worth thinking about, the philosophy which leads one to separate, divide, classify, formalize, deaden, or the art which leads one to bring together, build, unite, construct, create, grow. It is a matter of choosing the way of Aristotle or the way of Plato.

THE OWL

Alfred Tennyson

WHEN CATS run home and light is come,
And dew is cold upon the ground,
And the far-off stream is dumb,
And the whirring sail goes round,
And the whirring sail goes round;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

When merry milkmaids click the latch,
And rarely smells the new-mown hay,
And the cock hath sung beneath the thatch
Twice or thrice his roundelay,
Twice or thrice his roundelay;
Alone and warming his five wits,
The white owl in the belfry sits.

THE IMPROVEMENT OF ORAL AND WRITTEN ENGLISH

A Study in the Use of Content Materials

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I. THE PROBLEM

A GRAPH of the percentage of A, B, C, and D grades awarded by the teachers of Bryant School for the first quarter of the year 1924-25 disclosed the fact that language drew a greater number of C, passable, and D, failure, grades than arithmetic, reading, geography, or history. As earlier studies in the variation of teachers' marks in grading papers have shown, this does not afford a true case against language. However, the situation prompted the teachers and principal to launch the building-wide study which is discussed in this paper.

Through a series of conferences, various suggestions were made which helped to indicate a point of departure for the investigation. Among these were:

1. There should be a more definite basis upon which to judge the gradual improvement in language power from year to year.
2. An attempt to improve English in all its phases would be a hopeless, discouraging task.
3. Such titles as, "How I Spent My Vacation," "Shopping for Mother," "An Exciting Experience," "On the Farm," etc., have been overworked.
4. Let us aim to give the pupil something to say or to write and then help him organize and present the material.

A partial definition of our problem is found in statements written by pupils themselves. Near the close of the school year, each pupil in grades four to eight wrote a composition using the title, "How Our Language Project Has Helped Me."

A fifth grade pupil wrote:

"My old language papers always took me an extra long time. It was because most of the time I did not know what to say."

A seventh grade pupil wrote:

"Our language project has helped me to

find interesting subjects to talk on and to make a good outline."

These are typical statements taken at random from the children's compositions. The average child is sincere when he declares that he doesn't know what to say. Only the clever, superior pupil can produce an interesting, worthwhile composition with the deadening title, "How I Spent My Vacation." On the other hand, the average child will take courage and begin to acquire power if he is permitted to read interesting material from history, geography, sciences, etc., with instructions to put the contents into his own words as an oral or written composition.

It is our firm belief that if, in the successive stages of language work, more use were made of models, and if pupils at the various levels were taught to observe the style of writers in the different content subjects, the English situation would become more hopeful, and the "next steps" in developing power to speak and to write originally would stand out more clearly. Are we not often guilty of attempting to induce the ability to write cleverly in those who will never do so, and of discouraging even the most promising students by failing to make them fully conscious of foundations on which to build vigorous speech?

II. PROCEDURE

IN ORDER to direct this investigation along a limited, well defined course, the principal with the assistance of three teachers representing the primary, intermediate, and grammar grade departments, respectively, prepared a procedure and submitted it to all the teachers of the school at a general conference. A portion of the outline is given below:

1. MAJOR AIM: In terms of pupil abilities.

The ability to select and organize materials from the content subjects for oral or written presentation.

2. MINOR AIMS:

- a. Mastery of the sentence sense.
- b. Mastery of the paragraph sense.
- c. Making good usage a habit.

3. METHODS:

- a. To develop ability to select and organize materials from the content subjects:

- (1) Study models from history, geography, science, industry, literature, etc.
- (2) Require thorough preparation before presentation of the oral composition.
- (3) Study and criticize oral compositions. Note: The office clerk will take down in shorthand a series of oral compositions to be studied by the classes and the committee.
- (4) Circulate at the proper levels about the school good specimens of oral and written compositions.
- (5) Frequently observe these steps in the process of developing the written composition:
 - (a) Outline—if more than one paragraph.
 - (b) Oral presentation.
 - (c) Class criticisms.
 - (d) First rough draft of composition.
 - (e) Final draft of composition.
- (6) Make consistent use of the outline in grades six, seven, and eight. Use this form:

I.

A.

1.

a.

(1).

(a)

II.

etc.

- (7) Each pupil should prepare an oral composition once a week.
- (8) Grades four to eight: A written composition from each pupil should be prepared and filed with the principal every two weeks.

The suggestions included instructions with reference to the minor aims of the study, but this paper will not deal directly with that phase of the work. It should be stated however, that the "mastery of the sentence sense," "mastery of paragraph sense," and "making good usage a habit" are, to a large extent, accomplished through development of the

major aim. This truth should be adequately emphasized here. The focusing of attention upon the selection and organization of interesting content material tends to provide the will and the power to produce sentences, paragraphs, and pride in good usage. During the coming year we shall use the composition as a whole as one avenue of approach in studying the sentence, the paragraph, and good usage.

Definite references to Parker's "Types of Elementary Teaching and Learning" and to Sheridan's "Speaking and Writing English" accompanied the suggestions to the teachers. Particular emphasis in conferences was placed upon such topics as the following from Chapter XII of Parker's book:

- 1. Conversation lessons in geography, history, etc., give pupils active, technical vocabularies.
- 2. Audience situations.
- 3. Written communication in content subjects.
- 4. Content subjects provide abundant audience situations.
- 5. Oral communication a further aid to writing.

The potential teaching effectiveness embodied in the points just enumerated should be apprehended by all teachers of English in the elementary school.

III. SOME PHASES AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

THIS EXPERIMENT required the circulation of good specimens of oral and written compositions at proper levels about the school. As the work progressed, it was found advisable to display some of the compositions in the main hall of the building where they might be studied by individuals or by whole classes at suitable times. Each room was given a mounting space where its oral and written productions were posted. Perhaps no phase of the study proved more interesting to the children than this. Necessarily, only oral compositions from grades one and two were available.

The tendency of intermediate and upper grade pupils to examine the entire series of compositions from the lower to the higher grades gave them a consciousness of gradually increasing ability which stimulated further effort to improve at the various grade levels.

The oral and written compositions repro-

duced below are submitted as evidence of some degree of success in developing ability to select and organize materials from the content subjects, and of requiring preparation before the presentation of oral compositions. With the exception of the lower grades, the prevailing method in preparing the oral compositions was:

1. Wide reading of topics from history, geography, travel, science, etc., to find interesting subject matter, or,
Discussion of science topic, or,
Reading selections from literature, etc.
2. Individual selection of topic.
3. Preparation of the composition.
4. Presentation before the class.
5. Class criticisms.

If a written production were required at this time, the materials developed for the oral presentation were available and, as a rule, were used. Frequently, a first rough, draft was prepared then followed with the final form.

Grade IB (oral)

The Little Green Frog

My mother saw a frog down in our basement in a little wet spot. He was a little green frog. My mother put him in a little hole and he hopped out and ran away.

Grade 3B (oral)

I Am a Butterfly

I am a butterfly. I came from a cocoon. Children try to catch me but I am too smart for them. Last year I was a little green worm, but now I am a beautiful butterfly.

Grade 3B (written)

Holland

I live in Holland. My cheeks are so fat and rosy. It is because I drink milk. I like to go riding with my daddy in his boat. In the winter I go skating.

Grade 4A (oral)

The Pueblo Farmer

The Pueblo farmer grows corn, beans, potatoes, tobacco, and cotton. They irrigate so as to water the garden and crop. You can see beans, squash, and pumpkins hanging from the roof of the houses.

Grade 4A (written)

A Street in China

The streets in the native parts of China are very narrow and quite crooked. In some streets we see barbers at their trade right in the streets and cobblers mending shoes in the streets. We find people cook-

ing in front of their houses. At evening it would be well to carry a lantern for some streets are dark and dirty. The common street lights are just candles placed in card board boxes.

Grade 6A (oral)

Crater Lake

Crater Lake is in Oregon. It is made by a volcano, and in Crater Lake there is a little island. It is judged by scientists that the water of Crater Lake is fresh and pure and some people think that there is an underground outlet.

Grade 7B (oral)

The Dandelion

The dandelion is a perennial plant, native of America. It grows wild all over the world. The dandelion leaves are basal when very young. The flowers make dandelion wine and root makes medicine. The stem is filled with milky substance. When it is young, you can cut it off. The dandelion flower is a separate flower, and it goes to seed. Only these seeds are wasted, and when the wind comes, it is hurled by a parachute. It goes and carries far enough away to spread it.

Grade 8A (written)

The Paving of 55th Street

Our class has been watching the paving of 55th Street and we have found it very interesting. After the surveyors have surveyed the street to find out where to lay the tracks an excavation eight feet wide and nearly two feet is dug with a steam shovel. Then the ties are laid crosswise and the rails are spiked on. Next the ties are raised eight inches from the ground with a ratchet jack and blocks are placed under them. Then they tamp the ground and place boards along the sides of the trench. Next concrete made of sand, gravel, cement, and water is poured in until it surrounds the ties and is one inch thick on top. While this is still soft small bricks are placed end to end on the inside of the rails. When the concrete is hard a cushion made of one part cement to three parts sand is put on two inches and big bricks are placed on top. A steam roller is used to level them up. The last thing put on is a thin finishing cement called grout. It goes over the top and runs down in between the bricks and hardens the cushion and helps hold the bricks together.

The above specimens of oral and written communication were taken at random from the large collection that has accumulated in the course of the study. The variety of topics has been considerably reduced as a result of our loaning certain sets of papers that are not available to the writer at this time.

The merit claimed for these compositions

lies in their directness and in the fact that they bear worthwhile information. The eighth grade description of the paving of 55th Street represents a type of work that is undoubtedly instrumental in vitalizing English. The observations and inquiries incident to this project certainly extend the pupil's "active, technical" vocabulary. This composition describing the paving of a street was written by a girl. Is it likely that she had at her command before this study was undertaken such words as, "ratchet jack" and "grout?" As this study continues next year, especial emphasis will be placed upon the use of major problems in the content subjects as a means of vitalizing English.

A few more statements from pupils of different grades relative to the values of the study may be in place here:

It has helped me in writing paragraphs. (5B)

It has helped me to have one paragraph on one thing. (5A)

I can talk much better in front of a class this year. (6B)

It has helped me in making better outlines and has given me a better choice of words and a chance to learn how to get good material. (7B)

Our language talks have helped me to get up and talk straight to my audience. (7A)

Since the time that the girl came in the room and took our compositions in shorthand I think I have improved. I think that I speak more distinctly and I do not repeat so much. (8B)

Seeing all the oral and written compositions in the hall, with all the repetitions and misspelled words makes me think that I could do better. (8B)

When I saw the talk I made on Mosquitoes written, I thought it was a third grader's. I have been trying to improve my enunciation which has helped me a lot.

At this stage of our experiment, a statement of conclusions, other than tentative, would be premature.

However, by virtue of this study, some processes and steps in the development of forceful speech are more clearly apprehended. They are:

1. Materials from history, geography, science, etc., may furnish the "something to say" which is so vital in giving the child confidence in organizing and presenting his thoughts.

2. The use of content materials from wide sources should precede the type of work which demands original, creative ability.

3. Major projects in the content subjects should be used to vitalize the work in English.

4. Thorough preparation and oral presentation should frequently precede the written form of communication.

HERE WE COME A-WHISTLING

Old Carol

HERE WE come a-whistling through the fields so green;
Here we come a-singing, so fair to be seen.
*God send you happy, God send you happy,
Pray God send you a Happy New Year!*

God bless the master of this house, likewise the mistress too;
And all the little children that round the table strew.
*God send you happy, God send you happy,
Pray God send you a Happy New Year!*

* From The Treasure Book of Children's Verse. Edited by Mable and Lillian Quiller-Couch. Doran.

STANDARDS IN ORAL COMPOSITION

GRADE ONE

CLARA BEVERLEY

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ALL FIRST GRADE teachers in Detroit assisted in securing standards in oral composition. The schools are divided into districts and each district is under the direction of a district principal. At the time these standards were secured, there were about 150 elementary schools divided into fifteen districts.

Each school constituted a unit for the selection of five compositions from the pupils of the first grade. Two teachers worked together with each class, one conducting the class and the other unobtrusively recording the compositions. All of the first grade teachers in the building formed a committee for the selection from all these of five compositions representing five grades of accomplishment; *inferior*, *fair*, *good*, *excellent*, and *superior*. These were sent to the chairman of the committee for the district, which had been selected by the principal of the district and the supervisor of English. The district committee in turn selected five compositions from all of those sent in by the schools of the district. These five were sent to the English Department. From the seventy five compositions thus submitted, the department in turn selected samples to represent *inferior*, *fair*, *good*, *excellent*, and *superior* grades of accomplishment.

Personal experiences formed the basis for all compositions and the classes were conducted in the usual way. Training in the relating of personal experiences brings the children face to face with the fundamental language problem, that of giving expression to the impressions made upon them by the experiences of life. This is a task requiring concentration and conscious effort on the part of the children, with the right and natural

reward of appreciation on the part of their classmates when they succeed.

The beginnings of the qualities and characteristics found in good literature are all to be observed in children's compositions. Coherence, climax, diction (including vocabulary, sentence structure and arrangement), individuality, humor, all of these are present in simplest form in the utterances of children, and sensitiveness to their presence is an indispensable requisite for the teacher. The notes attached to each set of compositions call attention to differences of merit which led to the classification.

It had been found that the presentation of single samples under each head, *fair*, *inferior*, *good*, etc., led in some cases to artificial and stereotyped results. For this reason, several samples are given under each head. Teachers are urged, besides, not to be oblivious of merit in style or content which does not parallel any of the samples offered, and to consult the department about results concerning which they are in doubt. The standards given are suggestive. They are to be used as helps, not necessarily models. One purpose of securing compositions in the way just described was to stimulate intelligent consideration of the attempt of the children on the part of teachers.

No attempt has been made to construct separate standards for X, Y, and Z groups. The fair samples may be taken as an indication of what a large majority of an entire class can do at the end of the grade. It is hoped that the use of the standards will stimulate accomplishment to the point where satisfactory separate standards will be possible.

STANDARDS

Inferior

1. I bring my kitty milk. I have a little kitty and a big kitty.

My Cat

2. My cat eats meat. My kitten goes in her nest in the barn.

3. I go to the grocery for my mother. Then I go home. Then I ride around.

Comments

Compositions 1 and 2 are lacking sequence. Composition 3 lacks definiteness. It is without motive and seems spoken to order.

Fair

1. We have a kitty at home. Mother calls him Snowball, but he is as black as coal. When my mother feeds him, he sits up on his hind legs and begs.

My Dog

2. I have a dog. His name is Spot. One day I had a cookie and he came along and took it way from me.

How I Know It Is Spring

3. I know it is spring because I picked a blue violet yesterday. I put it in some water.

Comments

The *Fair* compositions are coherent and are more interesting than those rated as *Inferior*.

*Good**My Pet*

1. I have a gray and white cat. One day she ran away. When she came back I gave her some milk and she said "Thank you" by giving me her paw to shake.

2. Once upon a time we had a cat. It went next door and the woman had some jello on the top of the ice-box. The cat got up on a chair and ate all the bananas out of the jello. She boxed his ears and sent him home.

3. I saw a little blackbird on a branch of a tree. I said "Hello." He said "Peep-peep." That means "Hello."

Comments

The relation of a complete incident gives composition 1 a **higher rank** than *Fair* 1.

Composition 2 is more definite than *Fair* 2, which does not give a clear idea of the situation.

Composition 3 is superior in organization to *Fair* 3.

*Excellent**My Dog*

1. I have a dog at home. His name is

Sport. He jumps through hoops for me. I wouldn't give him away for a hundred dollars.

My Brother's Balloon

2. My brother had a gas balloon. He was playing in the house with it. He let go of it. It went up in the air and struck the point of the electric light bulb. It burst. My brother cried.

Two Little Tulips

3. When I was out in the yard, I saw two little tulips. They were growing up. A little baby came along and picked one flower because it was red.

Comments

No. 1 is more vigorous than *Good* 1. It expresses strong feeling indirectly.

No. 2 is ranked higher than *Good* 2, which opens with "Once upon a time," an unsuitable beginning. The *Excellent* composition is clear in its use of pronouns.

No. 3 is somewhat more mature in expression than *Good* 3.

*Superior**My Cat*

1. Once I saw a little bird. He was hopping in a lady's yard. My kitten came creeping along. She tried to catch the little bird. The little bird flew away and I was very glad that it did.

Our Cat

2. We have a black cat at home. The lady next door has rats in her house. One day we put Billikins in there and locked the doors and put cheese all around. When she came back the rats were eating the cheese and Billikins was fast asleep on the table.

3. I have three or four dolls and every day I play with them. When I put them to bed at night they go to sleep and sometimes they sleep three or four days. I am busy and forget them.

Comments

No. 1 relates a complete incident and conveys a vivid picture in "creeping along." The expression of personal feeling is also attractive.

No. 2 sums up a situation unusually well in the last sentence. It takes the cat's name for granted. It exhibits a sense of humor.

No. 3 is more mature in expression than *Excellent* 3. It exhibits a sense of humor.

CHILD PROBLEMS IN THE READING ROOM

RACHEL BENSON

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GERALD STANLEY LEE in his "The Child and the Book" has several things to say on the subject of turning a child loose in a library. He says that this might be called "a fairly dangerous thing to do, if it were not much more dangerous not to." And further,—*"Trusting a child to the weather in a library may have its momentary embarrassments, but it is immeasurably the shortest and most natural way to bring him into vital connection with books. The first condition of a vital connection is that he shall make the connection for himself. The relation will be vital in proportion as he makes it himself."*

The ability to understand and put into practice this principle of "trusting a child to the weather" in a library is perhaps one of the most difficult of the achievements of a school librarian. She is surrounded with an atmosphere of teaching and the urge to instruct is strong, but she must realize that the most patent factor in the forming of the reading habit is the instinct of curiosity, and that the surest way to dull that instinct is to make a child conscious of the fact that his choice in reading is being guided deliberately. By allowing a child to feel this, we are taking from him the joy of discovery,—than which few greater delights can be imagined.

Suppose we watch a group of fourth grade boys and girls on their first visit to the school library. The librarian has prepared for this visit by placing on the tables several books which she knows this group can read and enjoy. She talks to them for a few moments about the mechanics of using the library; the method of charging and returning books, the need for careful handling, and the necessity for quiet in the room. She talks briefly about some of the books on the tables and shows them the shelves which contain

others most likely to interest them. Then she leaves them free to explore.

Let us see what follows. Several of the group are browsing among the volumes at the tables, one held by an attractive cover, another by a striking title, still others by what the librarian has just told them. But on this first visit most of the group will desert the table for the shelves; they are on a voyage of discovery, a voyage which will never end as long as there are books to be read and eyes to read them.

Now, the chief joy of being a librarian is the double one of watching this voyage embark, and later of seeing it assume direction. The first process may be halted by many false starts, the second is often slow and oftener indeterminate. Nevertheless to one who is watching, there are high spots to indicate the direction toward which the journey is shaping its course.

Among the group of children who have left the tables to explore the shelves are two boys who have found a book of ships which each alternately tries to extract from the other. The librarian supplies another book on the same ever-popular subject and peace ensues. Still another boy wants boat books,—*"not stories about ships, but a book that will tell how to make a sail-boat."* A book on *"how-to-make-things"* is found and the librarian and the boy go through the index together, looking for sail boats. This may be the first practical use the child has discovered for an index, outside a class-room text. The chapter found proves to be adequate in description but deficient in illustration, so the librarian indicates several other books which may yield pictures, and leaves the boy to study more indexes. By the end of the hour he has found just what he needs

and brings it elatedly to the desk to be charged.

A little girl wants to take home a book which is obviously much too old and difficult for her. The librarian, though tempted to interfere, does not suggest that the choice is unwise, but charges the book and awaits the child's next move. Before the hour is over she is again at the desk with a request that she "may change her mind" and take another book. Permission is granted: the second choice is more deliberate and consequently more satisfactory. She has learned quite alone a new lesson in discrimination. Perhaps if the librarian had suggested that the book was too hard, the child would have been hurt or unconvinced.

Here is a boy who has been leafing through the pictured encyclopedia and has come to an article on whales which he is eagerly reading. The article finished, he brings the book to the desk. "This tells all about whales except why they spout, and that's what our science teacher asked us to find out." Another encyclopedia is consulted but the question is still unanswered. A natural history proves to have a chapter on whales, and with great glee the boy announces a few moments later that he now knows both why and how a whale spouts. Another boy has snakes for pets and is reading about the food they like and the kind of cage that will house them best.

Three girls have found a book of plays and are choosing parts for a program which they have been asked to prepare for the next week. They had not thought about the possibility of using the library for suggestions until they came upon this book and discovered that it supplied their need. The librarian has just helped one girl to find patterns for the card board furniture which she wants to make for her doll house, and another has

found the "Burgess Flower Book," which has its own particular charm for her because she had her own garden during the summer and is already making plans for next year's gardening.

It is now time for this group to return to the class room, and there is a last minute rush to have books charged. The cards for these books which are being taken home are an indication to the librarian of the general and specific tastes of the group, and she will use them as an aid in preparing for next week's library visit. Perhaps, in view of the fact that seven books on ships have been charged, she will make a bulletin board with pictures of the different types of merchant vessels, or one which illustrates famous ships of history. The choice of books which she will display on the tables will be guided in part by the evidence of interest indicated on these charging cards.

If we might come with this same group for their next library hour, we should probably find them rushing to the desk with questions which have come up during the week and which have been left to be looked up in the library; we should find much excited comment on the books they are returning and renewing; there would be the inevitable racing and scrambling at the fairy tale and story book shelves, and a more ordered yet none the less eager advance to the sections where the small enthusiasts have learned that their hobbies are shelved. The librarian would probably be a more active member of the group than during the first visit.

But, in terms of these book voyages which are being launched, the wise librarian will always be a passenger or a member of the crew, content to trust the youthful captains to the weather and to let the journeys take direction as they may.

EDITORIALS

WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS FOR FEBRUARY?

EACH MONTH, I shall address a few inquiries to subscribers concerning their most immediate needs. In this way, if the response is prompt, I hope to provide in *THE REVIEW*, as much as possible of the material that is called for by readers.

What are your needs for the month of February? Do you desire special material for class room use? For use in the reorganization of the course of study? For the school library? For the auditorium?

Definite, prompt answers to these questions will aid greatly in meeting the needs of subscribers.

C. C. Certain, Editor

THE DEPARTMENT OF SUPERINTENDENCE ON CURRICULUM REVISION

FOR SEVERAL years the Department of Superintendence has had committees at work upon difficult problems in elementary school English. Reports have been compiled upon essentials, upon standard scales, upon the materials of instruction, and upon other factors. The National Society for the Study of Education has published reports of great importance to the teacher of English in the elementary school—notably the Report on Silent Reading, and the Huddleson Report on Composition. From many other sources impulses have been felt.

There was, therefore, singular timeliness in the action of the Department of Superintendence taken last February, calling for a country-wide movement to bring courses of study in all school subjects up to date.

Some school systems had not revised their courses of study in grade school English for more than a decade. Others had made only occasional rehashes of courses gathered from neighboring states, counties, or cities. A thorough-going revision, a rebuilding of the course of study in the sense that basic principles were being applied to local situations, in the sense that the real needs of school children were being considered, was with a few exceptions, almost unknown.

Today the story is very different. Many states and cities are reporting completely

revised courses of study, or rather new courses. Des Moines, Iowa, has done a thorough job, as have also, Denver, Colorado, Detroit, Michigan, the state of Minnesota, and Baltimore, Maryland, and many other school systems.

The Department of Superintendence has set a new standard in leadership. It has stimulated action in the direction of long discussed needs. In consequence, the work of teachers in many sections of the country will be advanced this coming year, by a decade or more.

A CLEARING HOUSE

IN THIS number of *THE REVIEW*, emphasis is given to the problem of rebuilding the course of study in elementary school English. Continued attention will be given this problem during the months to come. There is an unusual amount of work being done in relation to the course of study because of the emphasis that is being placed here by the Department of Superintendence.

The article on "Rebuilding the Course of Study in Elementary School English in the Denver Schools" came to *THE REVIEW* close upon the conclusion of the task. Two members of the committee on the Denver course of study prepared the article and have given an excellent account of their work. Their article is remarkably concrete. In it are given the results of several months' experience with curriculum revision. The Deputy Superintendent of the Denver schools writes that within a short time they shall have their English program completed for the twelve grades. He adds that they expect continually to revise.

Within a short time, *THE REVIEW* will contain in some detail, a discussion of the Denver courses of study in English. Other courses of study reorganized in other school systems will be reported in due time with some accounts of their preparation.

With so many school systems making a concentrated effort to rebuild their courses of study, it seems that *THE REVIEW* shall demonstrate its value as a clearing house. Anyone interested in knowing what has been contributed of value in curriculum organization, during the past year, should consult the index, page 371 in this number. The weather wise will watch future numbers for what is in store.

REVIEWS AND ABSTRACTS

THE CHILDREN'S POETS. By Walter Barnes. Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y.: World Book Company, 1924. 258 pages.

This book is the first of its kind—a collection of essays upon the outstanding children's poets, those "who have enlarged the field of children's poetry or introduced new notes."

In his introductory chapter Mr. Barnes expresses some of his beliefs in regard to the sort of poetry that children should know. All the great poets have written a few poems for children. Of course these should be given them as well as the work of the poets who have written particularly for them. While we must not limit them to child's fare entirely we must remember that the average child will find more pleasure in juvenile poems. Some teachers go to the other extreme and give their pupils insincere, childish songs to learn instead of fine folk songs. Poetry for children must be sincere and true, with beauty of sound, picture, and thought. The poems should be brief; the rhyme and structure, simple. A marked "singing quality" is desirable. Regular rhythm and marked accents are other necessary characteristics.

A children's poet must be a true poet and must also have special powers. He must not only love children, but must understand them, seeing life from their viewpoint.

These principles stated, the author proceeds to discuss the work of fifteen poets, seven of them women. The chapter on Mother Goose is a fine example of his keen power of analysis. It is of timely interest just now because there have been two attacks on Mother Goose in recent periodicals, and it is not a little comforting to those who still believe in the value of the old lady's jingles.

It is not likely that anyone will quarrel with his estimate of the different poets. Stevenson, Christina Rossetti, William Blake, closely followed by Walter

de la Mare and Frank Dempster Sherman, are apparently his favorites and the chapters devoted to them are especially interesting. His comparisons are excellent. One will not soon forget "the idyllic existence" of Blake's children. Stevenson's "wistful little boy," Christina Rossetti's "delicate little girl," nor Laura E. Richard's "family of rollicking youngsters."

He is very fair to the lesser poets, the nonsense writers, Lear and Carroll; Riley and Field, introducers of the "shuddery—shivery" note; Laura E. Richards, who shared with Field the ability to write nonsense and charming lullabies and who also wrote many verses about the life of happy children in the home; Ann and Jane Taylor, the first to write exclusively for children; Celia Thaxter, with her sea poems and charming little girl sketches; and Lucy Larcom, whose "Brown Thrush" most children know and love.

While the book is intended for parents, librarians, and teachers, with particular reference to normal school students, it is no ordinary text-book. Written in an intimate, informal style, it is charming and delightful. One is tempted to quote at length, but these two illustrations will show something of the style. "Oral tradition has been the amber in which nearly all the folk lore, folk games, and folk literature we now possess have been preserved." In speaking of Ann and Jane Taylor he says, "A century ago children were overtrained and kept like clipped yews along a garden path."

At the end of each chapter there is a collection of typical poems to illustrate his essay. These add greatly to the value of the book, because one has right at hand the material for comparisons. A bibliography of twenty anthologies and a list of fifteen other children's poets, with short descriptions of the work of each, make the book still more helpful.

CLARISSA MURDOCH.

FROM THE PERIODICALS

THE EFFECT OF THE SUMMER VACATION ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL ABILITY AND ON THEIR RETENTION OF ARITHMETIC AND READING—The article is an abstract of a thesis. Data were obtained by testing 149 children in grades 4 to 8, in June, and again in September. The medians obtained showed that there was a gain in general intelligence in each grade. In reading, three grades gained in the median, and two lost. The Thorndike-McCall Silent Reading Test, Form 2, was used. The Woody-McCall Mixed Fundamentals Form 1, and the Woody Multiplication tests were given for arithmetic, and they showed that all grades lost in the median.

An effort was made to discover whether supernormal, normal, or subnormal children show the greatest changes after summer vacation. The median of the supernormal group showed a gain in general intelligence in all grades, while in reading, this group lost .215 in median. The median in grades 4 and 5 showed a large loss in arithmetic, and grades 7 and 8 changed very little. All grades of the normal group gained in intelligence. In reading, all grades lost, with two exceptions, and all grades lost in arithmetic, except the 8th.

General intelligence showed a gain in the median for the subnormal group in all grades. A gain was made in reading, but in arithmetic, as with the other groups, there was a loss.

In general summer vacation benefits general intelligence, does not affect reading greatly, and has a detrimental effect on arithmetic. The supernormal gain most in intelligence, and retain most in reading and arithmetic. Recommendations, based upon these findings, are made.—Mildred V. W. Patterson. *Education*, December, 1925. Page 222.

TEACHING PEACE IN THE SCHOOLS—A commission, consisting of representatives of the board of education, and of the schools, is proposed. This com-

mission should consider the teaching of Permanent Peace in the schools. Among considerations are: the aim of peace education, subject matter and methods of such education, problems which must be solved as prerequisite to abandonment of international strife. The aims, methods and content, and necessary prerequisites are suggested.

The article appeared first in the *Bulletin of High Points*, published by the Board of Education of New York City.—Ralph B. Guinness. *Education*, December, 1925. Page 214.

AN EXPERIMENT IN CHILDREN'S VERSE—Details are given of each of four lessons, which were presented to a class of 13-year-old girls. The first lesson dealt with rhythms in nature and in verse. Moods in poetry was the subject for the second lesson, in which the relation between rhythms and moods was pointed out. A narrative in verse was composed by the class during the third lesson, and for the fourth, the class wrote a lyric.—F. M. W. *The Education Outlook (English)* June 1925. Page 221.

FORMALISM AN EVER-PRESENT DANGER—Formalism is defined as "the result of mistaking means for ends . . . forgetting the spirit of the law in insisting on the observance of its letter." It appears in every phase of our life, and has for centuries been the aftermath of important educational movements. The study of the humanities, the Pestalozzian movement, the work of Herbart and Froebel, all became formalized in the hands of the followers of the movements. The two great educational movements of today—the development of intelligence tests and of the project method—are not free from this danger. Two things are suggested to avoid formalization: training in the philosophy of teaching as well as in the technique, and a constant distinction between means and ends.—R. H. Eckelberry. *The Educational Review*, December, 1925. Page 237.

AMONG THE PUBLISHERS

BEMOL AND KUSUM. By Herbert E. Wyman. Illustrated by Helene Carter. Yonkers-on-Hudson, N. Y. World Book Co. (Children of the World series)

THE BOY SCOUTS YEAR BOOK. By Franklin K. Mathiews. New York. Appleton.

THE COCK AND THE HEN. A Czechoslovak Folk Tale. Illustrated by Rudolf Mates. New York. Raf. D. Czalatnay.

FIREWEED. By Ethel Cook Eliot. New York. Doubleday, Page.

THE FORCE IN THE FOREST. By Padraic Colum. Illustrated by Boris Artzybasheff. New York. Macmillan.

JINGLES. A Reader for Beginners. By Alice Rose Power. Illustrated by Marie Schubert Rathbon. San Francisco. Harr Wagner.

LITTLE DOG READY AT HOME. By Mabel F. Stryker. Illustrated by Hugh Spencer. New York. Henry Holt.

THE LITTLE LOST PIGS. By Helen Fuller Orton. Illustrated by Loxor Price. New York. Stokes.

LITTLE UGLY FACE. By Florence Cauldine Coolidge. Illustrated by Maud and Miska Petersham. New York. Macmillan.

THE LIVING FOREST. By Arthur Heming. Illustrated by the author. New York. Doubleday.

THE MODERN SCHOOL READERS. Book four. By Ruth Thompson, Harry Bruce Wilson, and G. M. Wilson. San Francisco. Harr Wagner.

PLACES AND EVENTS. By Lincoln Mac Veagh. New York. Henry Holt.

THE SCARLET COCKEREL. By C. M. Sublette. Boston. Little, Brown.

THE SLY GIRAFFE. By Lee Wilson Dodd. Illustrated by Clarence Day, Jr. New York, E. P. Dutton.

STORIES OF EARLY MINNESOTA. By Solon J. Buck, and Elizabeth Hawthorn Buck. New York. Macmillan.

SWEET TIMES AND THE BLUE POLICEMAN. By Stark Young. Illustrated by Edwin Avery Park. New York. Henry Holt.

TALES OF A GRANDFATHER. By Walter Scott. Illustrated by Rodney Thompson. Boston. Ginn and Co.

TYKE-Y. By Elinor Whitney. Illustrated by the author. New York. Macmillan.

WONDER TALES FROM CHINA SEAS. By Frances J. Olcott. Illustrations by Dugald Walker. New York. Longmans, Green.

SYMMETRY*

Anonymous

THERE'S a cat in the garden a-laying for a rat,
There's a boy with a catapult a-laying for the cat;
The cat's name is Susan, the boy's name is Jim,
And his father round the corner is a-laying for him.

* From Another Book of Verses for Children. Edited by E. V. Lucas. Macmillan.

SHOP TALK

REBUILDING THE COURSE OF STUDY

THE ELEMENTARY ENGLISH REVIEW is doing its part in the movement stimulated by the National Education Association for the reorganization of the courses of study in elementary school English.

Constructive articles are published in each issue as aids to the committees that are at work upon courses of study. Book lists, book reviews, and abstracts of pertinent articles in current periodicals are featured monthly.

The following selected list of articles already published indicates what may be looked for in the future:—

- Reorganizing the Course of Study.—Franklin Bobbitt, School of Education, University of Chicago.
- The Chicago Standards in Oral Composition.—James F. Hosc, Teachers College, Columbia University
- What Children Like to Read: A Symposium.—Elizabeth Knapp, and others
- Why Boys Read Blood and Thunder Tales.—Franklin K. Mathiews, Librarian, Boy Scouts of America
- A Grade School Library List.—Doty School, Detroit, Michigan
- Pupil Activities in Elementary English Texts.—Clara Axie Dyer, School of Education, Chicago University
- Composition and the Composition Class.—Elvira D. Cabell, Chicago Normal College
- The Correlation of Safety with English.—Ida V. Flowers, Montebello Public Schools, Baltimore, Md.
- Cultivating Skill in Sentence Building.—Howard R. Driggs, New York University, New York City
- Diagnosis of Spelling Difficulties.—Ina H. Hill, Detroit Public Schools
- Silent Reading in the Elementary Grades.—G. T. Buswell, School of Education, Chicago University
- Stage Craft for the Elementary School Teacher.—George Styles, Detroit Public Schools
- Teaching Written Composition in Rural Schools.—Ruth Hendrickson, Dane County, Wisconsin

- The Value of Oral Reading.—C. R. Rounds, Elizabeth Public School, New Jersey
- Silent and Oral Reading in the First Grade.—Clarence R. Stone, San Diego, California
- World Friendship and Children's Literature.—Hugh Lofting, Author of Dr. Dolittle, etc.
- What Is Elementary School English?—Orton Lowe, State Department of Education, Harrisburg, Penn.
- International Friendship Through Children's Literature.—Elizabeth B. Wisdom, Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn, N. Y.
- The Social Individual Viewpoint.—A. H. Sutherland, Los Angeles, California
- The Elementary School Library Defined in Dollars and Cents.—C. C. Certain, University of Wisconsin, Madison
- A New Method of Teaching Beginning Reading.—Nila Banton Smith, Detroit Public Schools
- Home Made Composition Scales.—G. M. Wilson, University of Boston, Boston, Mass.
- Intelligence and Problems of Instruction in English.—Harry J. Baker, Psychological Clinic, Detroit
- Objectives in Elementary School English.—Estaline Wilson, Toledo Public Schools, Toledo, Ohio
- A Selected Spelling Bibliography.—Alice A. Kelley Russell, Detroit Public Schools
- The Correlation of Language and Social Sciences in Intermediate Grades.—Mabel Snedaker, School of Education, University of Iowa
- A Spelling Procedure With Social Values.—Alice A. Kelley Russell, Detroit Public Schools
- What Poetry Shall We Teach in the Grades?—Rollo L. Lyman, School of Education, Chicago University
- A Study of Children's Choices in Poetry.—Helen K. Mackintosh, School of Education, University of Iowa
- A Study of Children's Choices in Prose.—Wilma Leslie Garnett, School of Education, University of Iowa
- Teaching Literature in the Grades.—Orton Lowe, Harrisburg, Penn.
- The Retarded Child and His Composition Work.—Mrs. Charlotte Villard

SHOP TALK

FORTY IMPORTANT AMERICAN BOOKS OF 1924

NOTE: The American Library Association has selected at the request of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations the forty books of the year which it judges the most important for inclusion in a list of books of all countries. The world list is to be limited to 600 titles and to be published under the auspices of the Committee on Intellectual Co-operation of the League of Nations.

Countries publishing 10,000 or more new books annually are entitled to name forty. The British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Germany and the United States are the only nations in this class. Countries whose publishing is from 5,000 to 10,000 new works annually are entitled to name twenty; those of from 2,500 to 5,000—ten; below 2,500—five.

The best books ordinarily become known abroad very slowly, and it is thought that the annual publication of a concise list limited to 600 titles will be an effective means of drawing nations together into closer intellectual contact, by keeping them in touch with the works each nation believes to be its best. The American Library Association was selected as the authoritative body in the United States to choose that country's forty outstanding books of the year.

BELLES LETTRES AND ART

- Anderson, Sherwood—A Story-Teller's Story—N. Y., B. W. Huebsch
Bade, William Frederic—Life and Letters of John Muir 2 v.—Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company
Bianchi, Martha Dickinson—Life and Letters of Emily Dickinson—Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company
Boyd, Ernest—Portraits, Real and Imaginary—N. Y., Geo. H. Doran Company
Bradford, Gamaliel—Bare Souls—N. Y., Harper & Brothers
Brownell, William Crary—Genius of Style—N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons
Clemens, Samuel Langhorne—Mark Twain's Autobiography 2 v.—N. Y., Harper & Brothers
Firkins, Oscar—William Dean Howells—Cambridge, Harvard University Press
Gorgas, Marie Doughty & Hendrick, Burton J.—William Crawford Gorgas—Garden City, N. Y., Doubleday, Page & Company
Hambidge, Jay—The Parthenon and Other Greek Temples—New Haven, Yale University Press
Hammond, John Winthrop—Charles Proteus Steinmetz—N. Y., Century Company
Howe, M. A. DeW—Barrett Wendell and His Letters—Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press

Mumford, Lewis—Sticks and Stones—N. Y., Boni & Liveright

- Robinson, Edwin Arlington—Man Who Died Twice—N. Y., Macmillan Company
Seitz, Don—Joseph Pulitzer—N. Y., Simon & Schuster
Sullivan, Louis Henry—Autobiography of an Idea—N. Y., Press of American Institute of Architects
White, William Allen—Woodrow Wilson—Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company

TRAVEL

- Kent, Rockwell—Voyaging Southward—N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons

HISTORY

- McIlwain, Charles Howard—American Revolution—N. Y., Macmillan Company
Paxson, Frederic Logan—History of the American Frontier—Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company
Osgood, Henry Levi—American Colonies in the 18th Century 4 v.—N. Y., Columbia University Press

LAW

- Moore, John Bassett—International Law and Some Current Illusions—N. Y., Macmillan Company

NATURAL SCIENCE

- Beebe, Charles William—Galapagos—N. Y., G. P. Putnam's Sons
Huntington, Ellsworth—The Character of Races—N. Y., Charles Scribner's Sons
MacCurdy, George Grant—Human Origins 2 v.—N. Y., D. Appleton & Company
Cowdry, Edmund Vincent—General Cytology—Chicago, University of Chicago Press
Kellogg, Vernon—Evolution—N. Y., D. Appleton & Company

PHILOSOPHY

- Hart, Joseph Kinmont—The Discovery of Intelligence—N. Y., Century Company
Martin, Everett Dean—Psychology, What it has to Teach You about Yourself and the World You Live in—N. Y., People's Institute Publishing Company

RELIGION

- Fosdick, Harry Emerson—The Modern Use of the Bible—N. Y., Macmillan Company
Mathews, Shailer—Contributions of Science to Religion—N. Y., D. Appleton & Company
Rowe, Henry Kalloch—History of Religion in the United States—N. Y., Macmillan Company

SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Adams, Randolph Greenfield—History of the Foreign Policy of the United States—N. Y., Macmillan Company
Allport, Floyd Henry—Social Psychology—Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company

- Faulkner, Harold Underwood—American Economic History—N. Y., Harper & Brothers
 Fitch, John Andrews—The Causes of Industrial Unrest—N. Y., Harper & Brothers
 Giddings, Franklin Henry—Scientific Study of Human Society—Chapel Hill, N. C., University of North Carolina Press
 Merriam, Charles Edward & Gosnell, Harold Foote—Non-Voting: Causes and Methods of Control—Chicago, University of Chicago Press
 Pound, Roscoe—Law and Morals—Chapel Hill, N. C., University of North Carolina Press
 Small, Albion Woodbury—Origins of Sociology—Chicago, University of Chicago Press

BOOKS FOR TEACHERS

WILLIAM ALLEN WHITE and Walter E. Myer are joint authors of a reading course just published by the American Library Association, Chicago. *Conflicts in American Public Opinion* is the title. It is the sixth number in the series "Reading with a Purpose."

This little book of thirty pages brings up a dozen or more issues, such as "Should we clean up Mexico? Should we allow the radicals to agitate freely? Should we exclude the Japanese?" It gives commonsense advice on getting at the facts, and then—which is the real point of the course—names six books, none of them long and none of them difficult which "will furnish the material from which an intelligent opinion may be developed."

Other courses which have appeared in this series are Vernon Kellogg's *Biology*, W. N. C. Carlton's *English Literature*, Ambrose W. Vernon's *Ten Pivotal Figures of History*, Dallas Lore Sharp's *Some Great American Books* and Howard W. Odum's *Sociology and Social Problems*. Libraries throughout the country are circulating the courses and the books recommended.

DRAMA WEEK

February 14-20

NATIONAL Drama Week will be observed February 14-20. Wednesday of that week is to be "Drama Books, Magazines and Libraries Day," and the projects and topics suggested by the Drama League of America are:

- Drama books in every library.
- Read a play before you see it.
- More publicity for drama and the theatre.
- Special drama shelves in every library.
- Every good play in book form.
- Talks on drama in the libraries and book stores.
- Drama book lists from all the publishers.
- Drama bulletin boards in every library and bookshop.
- Drama articles and plays in every magazine.

The American Library Association is one of the organizations co-operating with the Drama League of America. A. L. A. publications which libraries will find useful in their plans for Drama Week are: *Plays for Children* by Alice I. Hazeltine, an annotated index, giving also lists of plays suitable for special days and special occasions (Cloth \$1.50); and *Viewpoints in Modern Drama* by F. K. W. Drury, which characterizes and gives complete acting information on 368 plays (Cloth \$1.25; heavy paper, 75c).

The Drama League of America and WLS, Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation, in the interest of better radio programs, are offering prizes of \$500, \$200, and \$100 for the best original radio play submitted before February first. The winning play will be broadcast during Drama Week from WLS and other leading broadcasting stations of the country. For particulars about the contest apply to WLS, Sears, Roebuck Agricultural Foundation Station, Hotel Sherman, Chicago, or to the Drama League of America, 59 East Van Buren Street, Chicago. Send all manuscripts to the former address, in care of the National Radio Play Contest Committee.

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